

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 PM-03 SP-02 L-01
INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 AF-04 ACDA-10 IO-06
PA-01 /060 W
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R 151633Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9413
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 11029

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR GW
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH CDU HESSE
LEADER DREGGER

1. I CALLED ON BUNDESTAG DEPUTY AND HESSE CDU LEADER
ALFRED DREGGER JUNE 12 FOR A GENERAL DISCUSSION.
FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS REMARKS.

2. INTERNAL POLITICS. DREGGER BEGAN BY COMMENTING
CRITICALLY ON THE FRG'S POLITICAL SYSTEM AT THE FEDERAL
AS WELL AS THE LAND LEVEL WHICH PERMITS THE FDP TO DECIDE
IN SO MANY CASES WHICH OF THE TWO LARGER PARTIES WILL BE
PART OF THE RULING COALITION. HE NOTED THAT THE FDP,
REPRESENTING SOME SEVEN PERCENT OF THE VOTERS NATIONALLY
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AND IN HESSE, WAS ABLE TO DECIDE WHETHER THE CDU/CSU,
REPRESENTING 48 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS, SHOULD BE IN
GOVERNMENT OR OPPOSITION. DREGGER ALSO SAID THAT THE
FACT THAT THE FDP NOW CONSIDERED THE WINNING OF THE
ENVIRONMENTALIST VOTE AS A TOP PRIORITY MADE THAT PARTY
SEEM RIDICULOUS. THIS MADE ITS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE
WHICH OF THE MAJOR PARTIES WOULD OR WOULD NOT BE IN

GOVERNMENT ALL THE MORE LAMENTABLE.

3. TURNING TO HESSE, DREGGER SAID HE HAD SCANT HOPES THAT THE FDP WOULD ACCEPT HIS OFFER OF A CDU/LIBERAL COALITION DURING ITS PARTY MEETING JUNE 17. IF IT DID NOT, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE CDU OBJECTIVE IN HESSE WOULD BE TO DRIVE THE FDP BELOW FIVE PERCENT AND THUS OUT OF THE LAND PARLIAMENT. EXPANDING, DREGGER SAID THAT IF THE FDP DID NOT COOPERATE NATIONALLY WITH THE CDU/CSU BY AGREEING TO JOIN THEM IN A FUTURE NATIONAL COALITION, THE TWO UNION PARTIES WOULD BE FORCED TO TAKE BOLD AND INNOVATIVE STEPS -- I.E., RUNNING ON SEPARATE LISTS NATIONWIDE. DREGGER SAID THAT SUCH A "FOURTH PARTY" APPROACH IS ONE THAT BOTH UNION PARTIES WOULD HAVE TO FACE CAREFULLY AND CONSIDER STEP-BY-STEP. HE SAID THAT FULL AGREEMENT BY BOTH CDU AND CSU ON SUCH A STRATEGY WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS, SINCE A FRATRICIDAL COMPETITION AMONG THESE TWO PARTIES WOULD BE SELF DEFEATING. IN HIS VIEW, HOWEVER, A CAREFULLY COORDINATED EFFORT BY BOTH PARTIES TO CAMPAIGN NATIONWIDE WOULD INCREASE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES FOR THE OPPOSITION BY TWO OR THREE PERCENT, I.E., ENOUGH TO GIVE IT THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY AND THUS THE GOVERNMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. DREGGER SAID THAT SOME OF THESE ADDITIONAL VOTES WOULD COME FROM THE SPD, SOME FROM THE LIBERALS, AND SOME FROM THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO NOW DO

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NOT TURN OUT AT THE POLLS.

4. US-SOVIET RELATIONS. DREGGER WAS PREDICTABLY TOUGH-MINDED ON THIS SUBJECT, SAYING THAT THE SOVIETS PURSUED A CONSISTENT, STEP-BY-STEP STRATEGY OF INCREASING THEIR GLOBAL INFLUENCE, WHILE THE WEST SUFFERED FROM INDECISION. THE US NEEDED TO PLAY A MORE FORCEFUL AND DECISIVE ROLE.

5. AFRICA. DREGGER, WHO HAS TRAVELLED IN SOUTH AFRICA IN RECENT MONTHS, WAS ALSO CHARACTERISTICALLY CRITICAL OF WESTERN POLICIES IN THAT REGION. HE PARTICULARLY CRITICIZED WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE IMPLICIT WESTERN RECOGNITION OF SWAPO AS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF NAMIBIA, AS WELL AS US AND EUROPEAN ATTITUDES TOWARD RHODESIA. HE SAID THAT SMITH HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN BRINGING KEY NATIONALIST LEADERS INTO THE GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS, AND LAMENTED THAT EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES WERE SEEKING TO BRING "REVOLUTIONARY" GROUPS INTO THIS PROCESS AS WELL.

6. NEUTRON WEAPON. DREGGER RESERVED HIS CRITICISM ON

THIS MATTER FOR THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT AND FOR
EUROPE, SAYING SCHMIDT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO GIVE A
SIMPLE YES ON A WEAPONS SYSTEM WHICH WAS NEEDED FOR

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 11029

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EUROPEAN DEFENSE. HE SAID THAT EUROPEAN BEHAVIOR ON
THIS SUBJECT HAD BEEN "ABSURD," AND THAT HE UNDERSTOOD
WHY THE US HAD TAKEN THE DECISION ON THE ERW THAT IT HAD.

7. COMMENT: DREGGER LEADS THE OPPOSITION IN WHAT HAVE
CLEARLY BECOME THE KEY ELECTIONS ON THE FRG HORIZON,
THE OCTOBER 8 HESSE VOTE, WHICH IS SHAPING UP AS A
CLOSE CONTEST. THESE ELECTIONS ARE CRITICAL BECAUSE AN
OPPOSITION VICTORY WOULD GIVE THE CDU/CSU A TWO-THIRDS
MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT OR UPPER HOUSE, PERMITTING
IT TO VETO MOST LEGISLATION ORIGINATED BY THE COALITION-
CONTROLLED BUNDESTAG. IN ADDITION, FOLLOWING THE FDP'S
JUNE 4 DEBACLE IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY, THE HESSE
ELECTIONS HAVE BECOME A CRUCIAL TEXT FOR THE LIBERALS'
ABILITY TO SURVIVE ELSEWHERE.

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8. DREGGER COMES ACROSS AS A POLISHED, SELF-ASSURED POLITICIAN WHO KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS TO SAY AND EXPRESSES IT ARTICULATELY. MOST OF HIS COMMENTS ABOVE ARE WHOLLY IN KEEPING WITH HIS CLEARLY DEFINED CONSERVATIVE IMAGE. MOST INTERESTING IN THIS CONVERSATION WAS DREGGER'S RELENTLESS CRITICISM OF THE FDP, AND HIS UNDISGUISED OBJECTIVE OF DRIVING THAT PARTY INTO OBLIVION IF NECESSARY FOR OPPOSITION VICTORY. THIS REFLECTS BOTH THE PRECARIOUS CONDITION OF THE FDP IN THE WAKE OF RECENT ELECTIONS AND THE HEIGHTENED URGE TO EXPLOIT THE FDP'S WEAKNESSES IN BOTH THE CDU AND CSU. ALSO INTERESTING WAS DREGGER'S EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR BOTH UNION PARTIES TO WORK STEP-IN-STEP AND COOPERATE, A SIGN THAT HE IS KEEPING HIS RELATIONS WITH BOTH KOHL AND STRAUSS IN WORKING ORDER.

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